

VZCZCXRO2748
RR RUEHBC RUEHDA RUEHDE RUEHIHL RUEHKUK
DE RUEHGB #0972 0981557
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 081557Z APR 09
FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 2614
INFO RHEHAAA/WHITE HOUSE WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS BAGHDAD 000972

SIPDIS

STATE FOR INR/R/MR, NEA/PPD, NEA/I, INR/IZ, INR/P
WHITE HOUSE FOR NSC

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: IRAQI MEDIA REACTION: PRESIDENT OBAMA'S VISIT TO IRAQ

11. (U) Summary: Iraqi media outlets called President Obama's April 7, 2009, visit to Baghdad an opportunity to stress the significance of the next 18 months leading to the withdrawal of U.S. combat forces from Iraq and to reaffirm his commitment to implement the U.S.-Iraq Security and Strategic Framework Agreements. News coverage of events was prominent and straightforward as details of the surprise visit unfolded on TV and the wire services. Outlets noted that the trip to Iraq marked Obama's first visit as president to an Arab state. Iraq's traditional Sunni TV channel called attention to the President's remarks on the need for more political reform and reconciliation in Iraq. End summary.

Focus on Bilateral Issues

12. (U) Iraqi media highlighted the President's meetings with Iraqi leaders and their discussions on the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq, the current security situation, and Arab-Kurd issues. They underscored the President's remarks to fully implement the U.S.-Iraq Security and Strategic Framework Agreements. Several outlets also aired live the President and Prime Minister's joint remarks. Iraqi print and wire services echoed these themes.

Sunni and Other Outlets Note Call for Political Reconciliation

13. (U) A secondary emphasis stressed by several outlets was Obama's call for more political reform and reconciliation in Iraq. The secular opposition Al-Sharqiya TV channel led its coverage of the visit with Obama's remark calling for Iraq to reach equitable solutions to outstanding issues among its political parties, noting that the President endorsed national reconciliation. In commentary, the Sunni channel said that the President's remarks are an indication that the administration's patience is "wearing thin" regarding the GOI's delay in integrating Iraq's security forces and state institutions. Al-Hurra TV and the pan-Arab daily Al-Sharq Al-Awsat echoed this theme.

First Visit as President to Arab State

14. (U) Nearly all Iraqi TV, print and Internet media noted in particular that the trip to Iraq marked Obama's first visit as president to an Arab state. Outlets mentioned that a dust storm prevented the President from traveling into central Baghdad as originally planned. Many newspapers that had earlier deadlines erroneously reported that President Obama spoke to Iraqi leaders by telephone. However, the TV channels correctly reported that the meetings took place in person at Camp Victory.

5.(U) Comment: Not surprisingly, Iraqi media coverage of the President's visit focused on the bilateral relationship and had less focus on his meeting with American troops in Iraq. End comment.

